

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland at College Park

Study Finds That Lowering Legal Blood Alcohol Limit Saves Lives

A recently released study has suggested that lowering state legal blood alcohol limits to 0.08% would result in 500 to 600 fewer fatal crashes per state each year. The study examined five states that had lowered their legal blood alcohol limit from 0.10% to 0.08% and five neighboring "control" states, which had retained the 0.10% legal limit. Of the five states that lowered their legal limit, four experienced a reduction relative to their control states in the proportion of crashes with a fatally injured driver whose blood alcohol was 0.08% or greater. Overall, the 0.08% law states experienced a 16% postlaw reduction in the proportion of crashes with a fatally injured driver whose blood alcohol was 0.08% or greater. All five .08% law states had administrative license revocation laws, which may have also affected the number of fatal crashes. Currently, only 14 states have lowered their legal blood alcohol limit to 0.08%.

**Percent Change in the Proportion of Crashes with a Fatally Injured Driver
Whose Blood Alcohol Was 0.08% or More,
Before and After the Passage of 0.08% Legal Blood Alcohol Limits in Five States**

0.08% Law States (Comparison States)	Percent Change Relative to Comparison State
Utah (Idaho)	-22%
Oregon (Washington)	-18%
California (Texas)	-18%
Maine (Massachusetts)	-7%
Vermont (New Hampshire)	45%
Overall Law Effect	-16%

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Ralph Hingson, Timothy Heeren, and Michael Winter, "Lowering State Legal Blood Alcohol Limits to 0.08%: The Effect on Fatal Motor Vehicle Crashes", *American Journal of Public Health*, September 1996, 86(9):1297-1299. For more information, contact Ralph Hingson of Boston University School of Public Health at 617-638-5160.

\$5.7 MILLION AVAILABLE FROM DOJ FOR DRUG COURTS

The Department of Justice has \$5.7 million in grants available for planning, implementing, or improving drug courts. Applications for all three types of grants are due December 2, 1996. For more information, contact Marilyn Roberts, Director, Drug Courts Program Office, at 202-616-5001.

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•• 301-403-8329 (voice) •• 301-403-8342 (fax) •• CESAR@cesar.umd.edu (e-mail) ••